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UNITED STATES  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ROSA L. DELAURO

3RD DISTRICT, CONNECTICUT

August 23, 2007

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COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

The Honorable George W. Bush  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to express my growing concerns regarding the recent series of defective products manufactured in China and to urge you to take immediate action on behalf of American families and consumers.

Just this week, Martin Designs Inc. announced a recall of 250,000 SpongeBob SquarePants Address Books and Journals because of excessive levels of lead. Mattel, the world's biggest toymaker, recently announced that its latest recall due to lead-based paint contamination of 1.5 million toys has been expanded by approximately 436,000 total—253,000 of which are in the United States. Moreover, in the last few months we have seen the recall of nearly 1 million units of Fisher-Price toys (including popular Elmo, Ernie, and Dora the Explorer figurines) and 1.5 million units of Thomas & Friends trains and accessories—all because of lead paint. To make matters worse, this comes on the heels of the recent tainted pet food and contaminated toothpaste imports from China.

With 45 toy recalls during the first eight months of this year, all involving imports from China, the need for the U.S. government to act and require our trading partners, especially China, and companies that import products to start taking full responsibility for their operations is clear. As such, given all these challenges and the inadequacy of our system, what is your Administration currently doing to ensure that defective products are identified before they reach the marketplace? Furthermore, what steps are you taking to ensure that children who may have played with defective toys are being tested for lead exposure? We need to act with a sense of urgency to restore consumer confidence and prevent potentially harmful toys from making it into the hands of our children. It is our obligation to ensure the safety of all products before they reach consumers.

While I welcome your decision to form an Import Safety Working Group, I am troubled by their announcement to push back the release of their recommendations from September to mid-November. Such action does not demonstrate an understanding of the magnitude of the problem and the need to act without delay.

Mr. President, we can not afford to simply wait for China to take action given that 80 percent of the world's toys are made there, especially with the approaching holiday season. Instead, I ask you to take action when a trading partner clearly violates standards of public safety so that harmful products never reach our store shelves. Only then can Americans be reassured that adequate safety protections and procedures are in place.

Like you, I believe that the safety of children should always be a number one priority. Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

  
Rosa L. DeLauro  
Member of Congress